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FRÉDÉRIC NEYRAT 2024-04-15

ZOMBIES OF THE DIGITAL

MASHINES ANALOG, DIGITAL, ZOMBIE

What do we try to give up through the delegation at play in moral machines? To answer this question, it is necessary to examine what happens when "immaterial" acts (like moral decisions) are turned into material operations that machines can take charge of. Actually, it is impossible to understand such transformations – from the immaterial realm to the material level – without considering, conversely, their ontological counterpart: the transformation of analogic reality into a system of zeros and ones. In this essay, I argue that this double process necessarily fails: the analogic always resists its digitalization and gives rise to what I call the zombies of the digital; conversely, the actualization of virtual entities always represses some potentialities and leads to what I call the specters of the analog. Haunted by their Haitian predecessors, the zombies of the digital resist the virtualization of the world; dialectically, the

specters of the analog await a collective, material body able to support their ontological claim regarding certain abandoned emancipatory projects. Metaphors jamming the dominant ontological operations of transformation, the zombies of the digital and the specters of the analog ask us not to delegate our desire for justice.

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